

NOTES FROM CENTRAL IOWA

BY PHILIP A. DUMONT

So very little has been published concerning late spring migration in central Iowa that some observations made in Polk, Dallas, Greene, Boone, and Hamilton Counties, from June 4 to 14, 1928, and from May 26 to June 21, 1929, are here submitted. Several of the field trips were taken with Mr. Arthur T. Watson and Mr. Kenneth R. Nelson of Des Moines. Mr. Walter Rosene of Ogden, and Mrs. John E. Stewart and Miss Olivia McCabe of Des Moines, were each on at least one trip with us.

In 1928 migration continued much later than usual, as is indicated by the number of birds seen on a field trip which Watson, Nelson, and I took on June 6 in Dallas, Boone, and Polk Counties. One hundred and ten species of birds were observed, including eleven species of shore birds. Of the fourteen kinds of shore birds seen during the eleven days of 1928 in Iowa, at least nine were recorded on a later date than any given for the state by Bent (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., 142, 1927; and 146, 1929).

On June 3, 1929, Watson, Nelson, and I spent over eighteen hours on a field trip in Dallas, Boone, and Polk Counties, and secured a list totaling 115 species. While only two species of transient shore birds were seen on this trip, during the first week of June in 1928, nine species were seen by us in the same region. Another trip taken on June 6, 1929, entirely within Polk County, resulted in a total of 101, including seven species not seen on June 3.

The summer of 1929 was characterized by an influx of Mockingbirds, by several breeding records of the Cedar Waxwing, and by the utter lack of migrating shore birds.

THE LIST

HOLBOELL'S GREBE. *Colymbus grisegena holboelli*. A flock of six birds carefully observed at Long Pond, seven miles west of Perry, Dallas County, on June 6, 1928. A male observed at Brenton's Slough, four miles west of Camp Dodge, Polk County, June 6, 1929. The recording of this species on such late dates is, of course, unusual. A more detailed account will be found in the September, 1929, number of the WILSON BULLETIN, pp. 191-192.

HORNED GREBE. *Colymbus auritus*. An adult in breeding plumage was on Little Wall Lake, three miles south of Jewell, Hamilton County, June 11, 1928.

GADWALL. *Chaulelasmus streperus*. On May 30, 1929, while at Little Wall Lake, Hamilton County, I had the unique experience of catching a Gadwall in my hands. I took it back to Des Moines with me for observation. Unfortunately it died the next morning. Evidently the bird was molting into the "eclipse" plumage, as the old primaries were quite worn and some of the new ones were already well advanced. This molting, no doubt, caused the bird's sickness and the resulting indifference to capture. In making up the skin no sign of injury could be found. The stomach was about half filled with pieces of pond-weeds and some form of small crustaceans. The specimen, a male, is now in Mr. Nelson's collection. Another bird was seen at Long Pond on June 3, 1929.

AMERICAN PINTAIL. *Dafila acuta tzitzihua*. Members of the Des Moines Audubon Society reported a male Pintail on a small pond at East 14th Street and Euclid Avenue, Des Moines, Polk County. The bird was present all through May and was seen by the writer on June 4, 1928.

CANVAS-BACK. *Nyroca valisineria*. A pair at Little Wall Lake on June 11, 1928, and the male was seen again on the following day.

RUDDY DUCK. *Erismatura jamaicensis rubida*. One female seen in a marsh east of Jewell on May 30, 1929; one at Long Pond, June 3, 1929; and one at Brenton's Slough on June 12, 1929.

HOODED MERGANSER. *Lophodytes cucullatus*. Two females were observed at Little Wall Lake, five miles south of Jewell, Hamilton County, May 30, 1929; one female seen with a flock of Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, a Gadwall and a Ruddy Duck on Long Pond, June 3, 1929. Because of the rareness of this species as a breeder in Iowa, it is quite probable that these were late migrants. A pair of these birds were found by Miss Olivia McCabe on a small pool of water in Des Moines, June 21, 1923. This pool, surrounded by willows and cat-tails, was within fifty yards of one of the principal avenues in the city. Because of the late date and of the fact that this was apparently a mated pair, they were reported as breeding, although I am not aware that the nest was found.

AMERICAN MERGANSER. *Mergus merganser americanus*. A single female (not a cripple), seen on a small pond four miles north of Ogden, June 13, 1929. The latest spring departure date for this species recorded in Anderson's "Birds of Iowa" is May 16, in Winneshiek County.

Anatidae. An analysis of the ducks found in central Iowa in June, 1929, is as follows: Common Mallard, common breeder; Gadwall, late migrant; American Pintail, a pair on June 3, and a female on June 6, probably breeding, no nests found; Blue-winged Teal, most common breeder; Shoveller, two males on June 3, and one male on June 6, probably breeding, no nests found; Lesser Scaup Duck, two on June 6, three males and one female on June 12, probably either late migrants or non-breeding birds; Ruddy Duck, late migrant; Hooded Merganser, probably late migrant; American Merganser, late migrant.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK. *Buteo platypterus platypterus*. The status of this species in Polk County has been given intensive study by several members of the Des Moines Audubon Society. A pair nesting in Crocker Woods, along the Des Moines River, have been found to be permanent residents. These birds were reported in the Bird Lore Christmas Census for 1927 and 1928. Mr. Watson has found them present during each month for two years and he furnished the data on the 1928 nesting recorded by me in the "Birds of Polk County, Iowa". About September, 1928, the female of the pair mentioned in the above account was noticed to have half of a third primary broken off and this conspicuous field mark served as a definite check on the bird's activities all winter, and until it molted the next summer.

FERRUGINOUS ROUGH-LEG. *Buteo regalis*. A pair of these hawks was seen at Brenton's Slough, west of Camp Dodge, on May 5, 1929, by Mr. and Mrs. John E. Stewart of Des Moines, and positively identified by us on June 6, 1929. Because of the similarity of this region to the rolling hills of western Nebraska we thought there might be a possibility of their breeding. But a search of the few trees along the stream disclosed no nest. Neither were the birds seen after that date. (See also Bull. Iowa Orn. Union, vii, 1929).

DUCK HAWK. *Falco peregrinus anatum*. An immature female at Camp Mitigwa, five miles north of Woodward, Boone County, on June 6, 1928.

RUDDY TURNSTONE. *Arenaria interpres morinella*. A male in breeding plumage was seen at Little Wall Lake, June 11, 1928. I know of only one other occurrence of this species in central Iowa and that is of an unpublished observation by Arthur T. Watson of a single bird seen on June 5, 1926, flying up the Des Moines River near Camp Douglas, about six miles northwest of Des Moines.

UPLAND PLOVER. *Bartramia longicauda*. One juvenal, at least two weeks old, was caught to be photographed at Paton, Greene County, June 12, 1928.

EASTERN SOLITARY SANDPIPER. *Tringa solitaria solitaria*. A single bird observed at Fisher's Lake, twelve miles north of Des Moines, on June 3, 1928. Undoubtedly this was a late north-bound migrant.

LESSER YELLOW-LEGS. *Totanus flavipes*. At Long Pond, June 6, 1928, a single bird crippled in one leg, and two birds there on June 12.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER. *Pisobia melanotos*. One at Little Wall Lake, June 12, 1928. Apparently a normal bird and uninjured.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER. *Pisobia fuscicollis*. In 1928 a flock of fifteen at Long Pond on June 6; seven at Little Wall Lake on June 11; and ten at Long Pond on June 12.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER. *Pisobia bairdi*. Six at Long Pond on June 6, 1928, one at Little Wall Lake on June 11, 1928, and one at Long Pond on June 12. This is a later spring migration date than has been recorded by Bent for this species in the United States.

LEAST SANDPIPER. *Pisobia minutilla*. Two at Long Pond, June 6, 1929.

RED-BACKED SANDPIPER. *Pelidna alpina sakhalina*. Observed on both trips to Long Pond in 1928. Three on June 6 and two on June 12.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER. *Ereunetes pusillus*. In 1928 one was seen at Brenton's Slough four miles west of Camp Dodge, Polk County, on June 5; ten at Long Pond, June 6; and three at the same place on June 12. Two of the three had injured legs.

SANDERLING. *Crocethia alba*. A single bird still in the gray winter plumage at Long Pond on June 6, 1928. This species is also a straggler through the central part of the state.

BONAPARTE'S GULL. *Larus philadelphia*. A single bird was observed at Long Pond on June 6, 1928. Although found along the larger rivers and lakes of the state, it is not common at any time in the interior.

LEAST TERN. *Sterna antillarum antillarum*. A single bird noted flying over a small pond at East 14th Street and Euclid Avenue, Des Moines, May 27, 1929. The only Polk County record prior to 1929 for this species was of two birds seen by Kenneth R. Nelson, June 16, 1922, on the Des Moines River.

BLACK TERN. *Chlidonias nigra surinamensis*. Although formerly a common breeder in central Iowa, this species has been crowded out

in late years by lack of suitable nesting areas—the result of draining the marshes and small ponds. Numbers of these birds were seen in June, 1928, and a flock of thirty-five was seen June 13, 1929, north of Ogden, Boone County. However, no nests were discovered at Long Pond, a likely breeding place, seven miles west of Perry, Dallas County.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO. *Coccyzus americanus americanus*.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO. *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*. The summer of 1929 witnessed the periodic appearance of the “17-year locust” or Periodical Cicada (*Magicicada septendecim*) in tremendous numbers, at least in central Iowa. Concurrently, large numbers of both Yellow and Black-billed Cuckoos appeared, and were found feeding on these pupae. Besides the cuckoos, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak was the only other species noted feeding on the cicada.

WESTERN BURROWING OWL. *Speotyto cunicularia hypugaea*. On May 9, 1928, a farmer living two miles northwest of Paton, Greene County, called Mr. E. W. Sells, of the same town, to report that four long-legged birds were staying around a ground hog hole in one of his fields. Mr. Sells visited the field on May 12, and saw two of the birds which he identified as Western Burrowing Owls. In writing to Mr. Walter M. Rosene, of Ogden, Mr. Sells gave him all the information and urged him to make a trip to Paton to confirm the identification. June 12, Robert Walker, Walter Rosene, Kenneth Nelson, and the writer accompanied by Mr. Sells, visited the same place and found one Western Burrowing Owl. The second bird undoubtedly was on the nest at that time as both were seen again on June 26, when Mr. Rosene spent the afternoon trying to photograph them. He succeeded in obtaining one picture. Mr. Sells saw six owls together later in the summer and concluded that four young grew to maturity. They were seen in the field until the latter part of October.

We secured about forty pellets on June 12 and several were examined by the late W. DeW. Miller, of the American Museum of Natural History, New York. These showed a large percentage of rodents while others found by Mr. Sells later in the summer consisted largely of beetles.

Dr. B. H. Bailey (Raptorial Birds of Iowa, 1918, pp. 231-233), records the Western Burrowing Owl from eight counties within the state. In five of these counties (Lyon, Sioux, Plymouth, Woodbury, and Sac), it has been reported as breeding, and in the other three (Dickinson, Kossuth, and Linn) its occurrence is only casual. Mr.

G. H. Berry's observations of this owl, made in the vicinity of Hawarden, Sioux County, and Lincoln County, South Dakota, are recorded by Anderson in his "Birds of Iowa". This record of Berry's is cited by Dr. Bailey but incorrectly credited to Linn County.

Therefore the nesting of the pair in Greene County is an extension south and east of the known breeding range of this owl.

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER. *Empidonax virescens*. In 1929 a mated pair was seen near Camp Mitigwa, five miles north of Woodward, Boone County, June 3; a nest containing four eggs was found by Messrs. Nelson and Watson in Crocker Woods, Des Moines, June 7. The nest, a loose structure made of plant-fiber and grass, was hanging in the drooping branch of a locust tree, three and a half feet above the ground. The eggs were hatched by June 20.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER. *Nuttallornis mesoleucus*. A late migrant noted on June 10, 1928, along the Raccoon River southwest of Des Moines. The whitish tufts of feathers on either side of the rump and extending on the flanks under the wings were quite conspicuous in this individual.

Tyrannidae. A summary of the members of this family found in Central Iowa in June, 1929, is as follows: Eastern Kingbird, common breeder; Northern Crested Flycatcher, common breeder; Eastern Phoebe, common breeder; Acadian Flycatcher, uncommon breeder; Alder Flycatcher, rather common breeder—several nests at Des Moines; Least Flycatcher, uncommon breeder; Eastern Wood Pewee, common breeder; and Olive-sided Flycatcher, very late migrant, uncommon—one seen south of Valley Junction, June 6. The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is a fairly common migrant in May, and the Arkansas Kingbird is a rare migrant, at least through Polk County.

NORTHERN CLIFF SWALLOW. *Petrochelidon albifrons albifrons*. One nest found by A. T. Watson, in a culvert northeast of Des Moines on June 1, 1929. Mr. Nelson and I found two pairs nesting near Moran, Dallas County, June 12, 1929. The nests were under the eaves of a corn-crib.

HOUSE WREN. *Troglodytes aedon* subsp. A male, collected at Des Moines, June 20, 1929, when compared with a series of subspecies *aedon* and *parkmani* in the American Museum of Natural History appeared to be intermediate. These intermediates are more common in central and eastern Iowa than the typical *parkmani*, and according to Mr. John T. Zimmer, a few of them have been collected in Nebraska.

EASTERN MOCKINGBIRD. *Mimus polyglottos polyglottos*. One bird observed by A. T. Watson and K. R. Nelson one mile north of Polk City, Polk County, June 3, 1929. Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Kinnaird of Valley Junction reported a pair of these birds six miles south of that city on June 4, 1929. Watson, Nelson, and I saw this pair on June 6 and found their nest, which contained two eggs. Later Mr. Kinnaird reported that the nest had four eggs, all of which hatched. Another pair of mockingbirds was reported by Mr. Sibley H. Crosby in northeast Des Moines, June 7, 1929. A pair of these birds was seen by Mr. Paul Sandahl at the City Nursery in East Des Moines, June 10, 1929. Mrs. Stewart and I saw the male on June 20, but could not find the female. We believed she must be on a nest, but none could be found. Mr. Sandahl reported that they were last seen on June 26, 1929.

WILLOW THRUSH. *Hylocichla fuscescens salicicola*. One seen in Des Moines, May 27, 1929. R. M. Anderson places this subspecies in the hypothetical list of his "Birds of Iowa", (1907). The range given for this bird in the A. O. U. Check-List is the following: "Breeds in lower Canadian and Transition zones . . . south to . . . central Iowa; . . ." Harry C. Oberholser, in a letter to me, June 15, 1929, says concerning the status of this bird in Iowa, "both might occur, get specimens; *salicicola* probably the common form. Otto Widmann (Birds of Missouri, 1907, p. 261), says of the two races in Missouri, "that both forms occur is certain . . . others (*salicicola*) have been taken in eastern as well as western Iowa . . ." It seems to me that this subspecies should have been included in Anderson's list.

CEDAR WAXWING. *Bombycilla cedrorum*. While at the Ledges State Park on June 10, 1929, the Custodian, Mr. Carl Fritz Henning, informed me that a pair of Cedar Waxwings was building in a cedar in his yard. On June 16, 1929, I noticed a pair building near the top of a mulberry tree at my home in Des Moines. The nest was about twenty-eight feet from the ground and some of the material used in its construction was taken from an abandoned Robin's nest near by. A great deal of string and strips of bark were used, and building was done only in the morning. In the afternoon the pair either fed on mulberries or perched side by side close to the nest. After coming to Des Moines to attempt a photograph of this nest, Mr. Rosene found, upon returning to his home, that there was a waxwing's nest within 150 feet of his own house.

STARLING. *Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris*. A pair seen in Des Moines, March 21, 1929, by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander W. Lee. This is the first

appearance of the Starling in central Iowa. (See the WILSON BULLETIN, XLI, p. 245, 1929).

TENNESSEE WARBLER. *Vermivora peregrina*. Two late records for 1928 are of single birds observed June 4, in Crocker Woods, Des Moines, and on June 6, Ledges State Park, south of Boone.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER. *Vermivora celata celata*. A male collected in Des Moines, June 6, 1929. This is over three weeks later than the previous late spring record for Polk County. Its song sounded like a cross between the songs of the Tennessee and Pine Warblers—a soft trill ending with an ascending note. The specimen is now in Mr. Nelson's collection.

GRINNELL'S WATER-THRUSH. *Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis*. A single bird observed at Long Pond on June 6, 1928, apparently a late migrant, as the only typical breeding grounds of this species was several miles away. In 1929 a pair of these birds was seen at Camp Mitigwa, north of Woodward, June 13. As both birds were carrying food we suspected that they had young in a nearby nest.

MOURNING WARBLER. *Oporornis philadelphia*. A male seen at Camp Mitigwa on June 13, 1929. There was no proof that this bird was anything other than a late migrant.

EASTERN SAVANNAH SPARROW. *Passerculus sandwichensis savanna*. A juvenal, probably out of the nest at least ten days, was observed with one adult along the west side of Little Wall Lake on June 12, 1928.

NELSON'S SPARROW. *Ammospiza caudacuta nelsoni*. One bird was noted at Long Pond and another at a small pond two miles south on June 12, 1928. It seemed likely that birds present at that date were breeding but no nests were found. A single bird flushed from the edge of the marsh at East 14th Street and Euclid Avenue, Des Moines, May 27, 1929.

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